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INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0635
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0483
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 0446
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 2377
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 002147

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA, INL/AEE;
ADDIS ABABA FOR U.S. MISSION TO AU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2014

TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR NI

SUBJECT: YAR'ADUA AND MADUEKWE CENTRAL TO GON PRESSURE ON
TANDJA

REF: A. ABUJA 2077

1B. ABUJA 2062

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe told Ambassador November 22 that President Yar'Adua and he were the only persons in the Nigerian Government (GON) who were strongly opposed to what Niger President Mamadou Tandja "is trying to do" in his country. Maduekwe noted "a lot of sympathy" for Niger in various quarters of the GON because of Niger's "unwavering support" for Nigeria "in good times and bad times," dating back to the July 1967 to January 1970 Biafra civil war, and because Niger has traditionally sided with Nigeria "on everything" in international fora. Despite this, however, President Yar'Adua has taken a strong stance against Tandja's actions. Maduekwe stated that his boss had become "angry" at what Tandja was doing and would continue to "work against this extra-constitutional behavior."

12. (C) Maduekwe complained to the Ambassador that the French were "not being helpful" in Niger. He asserted that the French say one thing in support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) position; yet, he said, their actions say something entirely different. He said that ECOWAS Facilitator and former Nigerian Head of State Abdulsalami Abubakar had grown frustrated by what he called France's "looking the other way" on Tandja. The French position, Maduekwe said, was making it tougher for ECOWAS to accomplish what needed to be done there.

13. (C) Maduekwe also remarked that ECOWAS officials had heard reports that Tandja was recruiting mercenaries from South Africa.

COMMENT

14. (C) Given that the Foreign Minister is prone to hyperbole, we need to put his comments that he and President Yar'Adua "were the only persons" against Tandja's actions in that light. That said, under Yar'Adua's leadership, Nigeria and ECOWAS are keeping the pressure on Tandja.

